



County of Los Angeles
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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June 29, 2004

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen 
Chief Administrative Officer

BROADCAST CAPABILITIES SURVEY

At its March 23, 2004 meeting, the Board directed this office to:

- Survey County departments to determine their television production capabilities, skills and staffing;
- Provide a cost comparison between County departments and outsourcing;
- Explore the feasibility of utilizing existing County department resources for Board meeting production needs; and,
- Consider including a 30-day cancellation clause in the broadcast contract should the County decide to use employees to provide the service.

We are submitting the following results of our review.

TELEVISION PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES, SKILLS AND STAFFING

In a previous survey of all departments, none reported having any television production or broadcast capabilities, however, five departments were identified as having video production resources: Child Support Services, the Fire Department, the Museum of Art,

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Public Social Services, and the Sheriff. Pursuant to the March 23, 2004 Board order, these five departments were further surveyed.

Responses of Departments

The Child Support Services Department indicated that it does not have a video/television production facility, but does have some equipment that is used to make instructional videos, and documentation of department training and meetings. The equipment was purchased with child support funding, so it cannot be used for other purposes. There are only two budgeted positions that use this equipment: a division chief (Public Information Officer II) and a Video Production Specialist.

The Fire Department reported that it has a video production facility, which it uses to produce public service announcements, and to document incidents for training and historical purposes. It has not produced any live broadcasts. The four positions budgeted for this function are: a Video Production/Multi-Media Specialist, a Video Production Technician, a Video Production Equipment Operator, and a Video Production Assistant (which is presently vacant).

The Museum of Art indicated that it has video production facilities, which it uses to make educational and promotional videos. However, all of the employees dedicated to this function are privately funded. They include: an Audiovisual Manager, Audiovisual Administrator, Senior Technician, and three Technicians.

The Department of Public Social Services produces public service announcements, and training, informational and town hall meeting videos. Equipment is rented, as needed. The department has office space in El Monte that it intends to convert into a video production studio, but it will be at least a year before the equipment can be purchased and installed. In addition to a Head, Media Services position, there are five budgeted positions, including four Video Production Specialists and a Video Production Assistant.

The Sheriff's Department has a small studio, without a control room or supporting equipment. The department produces training videos for deputies, most of which are produced on location in the field. The four budgeted positions are: a Head, Media Services; a Video Production Specialist; and two Video Production Technicians.

Broadcast Control Room Operation

Each department was asked if its staff could manage and operate the broadcast studio at the Hall of Administration to produce live televised meetings of the Board of Supervisors. The Child Support Services, Public Social Services, and Sheriff's

Departments said that their staff did not have the skills or experience to perform this work. The Museum of Art said that its employees could if they were trained on the systems, but that their current workload would preclude them from being available. The Fire Department said it would have to further assess the operation before it could determine whether televised meetings would require additional staff. However, it stated that the additional responsibility would place a hardship on the existing staff, which already has a backlog of work.

Additional Requirements of Television Production Staff

Televising the meetings is only one of the components of the Board meeting broadcast. The Board also requires on-screen graphics, simultaneous Spanish translation, simultaneous closed captioning, and three levels of transcripts from the closed captioning: a rough transcript available immediately after the meeting; a corrected transcript, linked to corresponding video and audio clips, and posted to the Internet; and a final, certified transcript, which is also posted to the Internet.

The County's contractor, Network Television Time, Inc. (NTT), currently produces all of these related services and integrates them into the Board meeting broadcast. NTT estimates that it requires 150 hours each week to provide these services, exclusive of the certified transcript, which is dependent on the length of the meeting. Many of these hours are spent before the Tuesday meeting, preparing the on-screen graphics from the agenda, and inspecting, maintaining, and repairing the equipment. Many more hours are spent after the meeting preparing, reviewing, and publishing the various transcripts.

Each department was asked to identify any of these services their present staff would be able to provide. All but the Department of Public Social Services thought they could provide the on-screen graphics. None of the departments felt they could provide the remaining services.

COST COMPARISON BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS AND OUTSOURCING

The enclosure compares the actual cost for the current contract to the projected cost if the County were to assume responsibility for broadcasting the Board's meetings. If the County contracted for the closed captioning, Spanish translation, and transcription services, there would be no anticipated savings. There would also be no savings for the purchase of equipment and repairs, as the contractor is billing the County for the actual cost of these items. Therefore, the cost comparison becomes focused on managing and producing the live television broadcasts.

The five departments reported that they did not have sufficient staff, or staff with the requisite skills and experience, to manage this operation. As a consequence, the

County would have to hire employees to perform these tasks. The enclosure shows that using the five classifications that most closely fit the responsibilities, for comparison purposes only, and assuming that each employee was on just the first step, the County's annual cost for this operation would be at least \$361,827, which is \$150,177 more than NTT is currently charging the County. (It would be necessary to study staffing requirements to determine actual numbers and classifications of employees needed if this operation were to be handled internally.) Because this projection assumes that the County could produce the broadcasts with fewer, full-time employees than the contractor uses on a part-time basis, the projected cost difference could be greater.

There would be no potential savings resulting from County departments having some video equipment and/or studios, since the equipment needed to broadcast the Board's meetings is already owned by the County and permanently installed in the Hall of Administration. This equipment has recently been upgraded to the latest digital technology and is generally different than the equipment used to make public service announcements and training videos.

FEASIBILITY OF USING COUNTY EMPLOYEES TO BROADCAST MEETINGS

When the Board began broadcasting its meetings nine years ago, it was a relatively simple process. It only involved televising the meeting and delivering a videotape copy to KLCS. It has become a much more complex operation over the years, as the Board has requested additional features (closed captioning, Spanish translation, and electronic transcripts) to accommodate the needs of hard-of-hearing and Spanish-speaking constituents, the media, Internet users, and County staff.

Based on the survey responses, County departments do not appear to have the staffing or expertise to assume responsibility for the weekly Board meeting broadcast and related services. While they may be experienced in the operation of a camera, they do not have the specialty skill needed to operate the eight robotic cameras in the Board broadcast room. Also, the departments do not have experience in producing a live broadcast, as their projects generally involve filming material and then editing it. The departments do not have engineering staff, which is a vital part in keeping our sophisticated systems operating properly. Producing the Board meetings live on a weekly basis requires staff familiar with both the equipment and the processes. The current process of hiring a contractor to be responsible for integrating the services has worked well for the County and we support the continuation of that approach.

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OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY CAPABILITY

The focus of our survey for television production and telecast capabilities was on County departments known to handle related activities. For your information, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) possesses experience in producing video programming, and has state-of-the-art studio facilities and mobile production capabilities. Although we have not approached them on their interest, the County Counsel's office advises that these services could legally be purchased directly from LACOE.

30-DAY CANCELLATION CLAUSE

We are in the process of completing proposal solicitation and appeal processes for a new contract for the Board meeting broadcasts. A 30-day cancellation clause will be included in that contract.

Please call me if you have additional questions, or your staff may contact Judy Hammond at (213) 974-1363.

DEJ:GK
JH/DS:hg/n

Attachments

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel

ANNUAL COST COMPARISON
TELEVISION BOARD MEETINGS

<u>BROADCAST SERVICES</u>	<u>Actual Contractor Cost</u>	<u>Projected County Cost</u>
Managing/Producing Live Television Broadcasts	\$211,650	\$361,827*
Subcontracted Services		
• Closed Captioning	14,000	14,000
• Spanish Translation	16,000	16,000
• Transcripts	<u>52,000</u>	<u>52,000</u>
Sub-total	\$ 82,000	\$ 82,000
County Equipment Related Costs		
• Supplies, Equipment, and Repairs	<u>\$ 33,000</u>	<u>\$ 33,000</u>
TOTAL	\$326,650	\$476,827

* PROJECTED COUNTY COST

County Position:	Annual Salary
Head, Media Services	\$ 57,132
Telecommunications Systems Engineer	75,607
Video Production Specialist	47,376
Video Production Equipment Operator	37,320
Video Production Technician	43,812
Sub-total	\$ 261,247
Employee Benefits (38.5%)	\$ 100,580
TOTAL	\$ 361,827

NOTE: These County positions were all that were available for comparison purposes only. It would be necessary to study staffing requirements to determine actual numbers and classifications of employees needed if this operation were to be handled internally.